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**AN EIGHT-YEAR FOLLOW-UP OF NROTC APPLICANTS'  
STATEMENTS OF CAREER INTENTIONS**

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AN EIGHT-YEAR FOLLOW-UP OF NROTC APPLICANTS'  
STATEMENTS OF CAREER INTENTIONS

By

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San Diego, California 92152

AN EIGHT-YEAR FOLLOW-UP OF NROTC APPLICANTS'  
STATEMENTS OF CAREER INTENTIONS

A. BACKGROUND

Many attempts have been made to identify, from among candidates for service as naval officers, those who are interested in making a career of the Navy. Because the training of naval officers is expensive in terms of time, facilities and money, it is important to make this identification at the time of selection of candidates for the various officer programs. The present study evaluates the validity of a direct question on career intention, asked at time of application, as a predictor of the career choice of NROTC officers made eight years after the date of application.

B. METHOD

Applicants to the NROTC Regular program were in 1956 given an experimental attitude questionnaire (NROTC Questionnaire Form 1 - NAVPERS 18452) designed to identify those who were career motivated (Rimland, 1957). Form 1 included a question, Item 13, which asked directly about the candidates' intentions concerning a Navy career. The item read as follows:

13. How sure are you that you would like to make the Navy or Marine Corps your career?
  - a. Do not want it as a permanent career
  - b. Undecided at present
  - c. Not sure but will probably decide on it
  - d. Pretty sure I want it
  - e. Have no doubt that I want it

The sample on which the present analysis is based consists of the 776 officers from the 1956 applicant group for whom both predictor (Form 1) and criterion data were available.

The required commission service obligation for the class entering the NROTC Regular program in 1956 was three years. For the purpose of this study those who served for at least six months beyond the obligated three year period were categorized as potential career officers. Those who were commissioned but served less than three years and six months as commissioned officers were categorized as non-career officers. Table 1 shows the career decisions of this sample of 776 officers as cross-tabulated with response to Item 13. The Appendix presents a more detailed breakdown.

TABLE 1

Percentage of Officers on Active Duty More or Less Than 42  
Months, as Categorized by Response to Question on  
Career Intention Asked Eight Years Earlier

Question #13. How sure are you that you would like to make the Navy or Marine Corps your career? <sup>a</sup>	Active Duty After Commission			
	Less than 42 Months (Non-career)		42 or more Months (Potential career)	
	<u>N</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Per</u>
A. Do not want it as a permanent career	32	7	9	3
B. Undecided at present	203	43	105	34
C. Not sure but will probably decide on it	75	16	61	20
D. Pretty sure I want it	127	27	91	29
E. Have no doubt that I want it	30	6	43	14
TOTALS	467	100%	309	100%

Note...--

<sup>a</sup>Question asked during January and February 1956, during NROTC applicant processing.

### C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It is evident from Table 1 that the responses to Question 13 were fairly good indicators of the NROTC applicants' eight year later decision to make the Navy a career. Of the 349 men who chose responses A. or B., only 114 or 32.7 per cent actually remained in the Navy as career officers beyond the 42 month period considered in this study. On the other hand, of the 427 who selected responses C., D., or E., 195 or 45.7 per cent of the officers remained on active service beyond the minimum required time. While by no means perfect prediction, this represents useful improvement.

By using all those on active duty at least six months beyond their minimal obligated service as the high criterion (retention) group, many officers were included who will not make the Navy a career. Research has shown that the percentage of NROTC officers remaining on active duty is relatively high for the first six months following the minimal service obligation. The percentage then decreases rather constantly up to about six years after minimal obligated service, at which point it decreases at an even slower rate (Githens, Rimland, 1964). The six-month criterion used here has the practical advantage of being available earlier than a criterion involving longer service beyond obligation. It also provides a convenient way of avoiding the problem of having too few cases in the career oriented group.

To test the stability of the conclusion based on the six-month criterion, the portion of the sample used in this study who had an opportunity to serve 18 months beyond their minimal obligated service (see Appendix) were analyzed, using 18 months or more as the definition of "career" officer and less than that as "non-career." Of the 387 who answered Question 13 in the affirmative (responded C, D, or E), 110 or 28.4% had remained in service. Of the 276 who answered in the negative (responded A or B), only 61 or 22.1% were still on duty. Thus the marked difference in retention rate based on responses to Question 13 using the six-month criterion held up when the 18 month criterion was used on a smaller group.

Previous research provides a precedent for these findings. Proctor (1963) and Steinemann (1963) found recruits' responses to a career intention question to be significantly related to their reenlistment four years later. The present officer study extended the prediction to a point in time eight years after the career question was asked. It is significant that in the present study the question was asked not of individuals already accepted into a program, but of applicants to a program.

Of those who said that they did not want to make a career of the Navy or were undecided at time of application (responded A or B to Question 13), 37 per cent were still on active duty six months beyond their minimal obligation and 22 per cent were on duty 18 months beyond their minimal obligation. Research is planned to investigate this interesting positive shift in naval career intentions.

#### D. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It would seem desirable that future programs for selecting NROTC Regular applicants incorporate the responses to a direct question on career intention in the selection procedures. Among the various possible ways of obtaining responses to a direct question of career intention, the following two seem most feasible:

- a. Keep the direct question in its present context, within the many questions on the NROTC Questionnaire.
- b. Incorporate the direct question on NAVPERS Form 2989, the College Plans Questionnaire, where it may be answered by the student on a sheet which will bear his signature. The form, of course, should make it clear to the student that his responding to this question and signing his name does not constitute a contract by him. Though not binding, it seems likely that with very few exceptions, honest and truthful answers would be obtained by this method (Rimland, 1967)

Responses to direct questions on career intention must, of course, be integrated with test scores, school grades and various other types of information now employed in the NROTC selection process.

2. Research should be undertaken to determine the reasons why certain men who had earlier indicated no desire for a Navy career had remained beyond obligation and why others who had originally planned on a Navy career left the service at the earliest possible date.

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# APPENDIX

Career Action by Applicants Responding to Each Alternative of Question No. 13 on NROTC Questionnaire Form 1 (1956)

Question No. 13.

How sure are you that you would like to make the Navy or Marine Corps your career?

- A. Do not want it as a permanent career
- B. Undecided at present
- C. Not sure but will probably decide on it
- D. Pretty sure I want it
- E. Have no doubt that I want it

Question No. 13 Responses	Failed to Complete College	
	No.	Per Cent
A	19	5
B	108	30
C	71	20
D	106	29
E	59	16
Blank	0	

## CAREER ACTION

	Less than 3 yrs act. duty		3 yrs act. duty		3 yrs + 6 mo act. duty		3 yrs + 1-1/2 yrs act. duty		3 yrs + 2-1/2 yrs act. duty	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Commissioned 1959	A	0	0	33	42	0	0	0	0	0
	B	4	44	15	19	5	4	44	5	18
	C	1	11	26	33	2	0	55	6	21
	D	4	44	5	6	6	5	0	13	46
	E	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	14
Blank	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Commissioned 1960	A	0	27	10	10	2	4	3		
	B	2	20	124	44	18	37	36		
	C	0	0	40	14	10	20	23		
	D	1	10	75	26	11	22	25		
	E	7	70	16	5	8	16	13		
Blank	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Commissioned 1961	A	1	14	4	5	3	4			
	B	2	29	38	48	25	33			
	C	1	14	18	23	12	16			
	D	3	43	18	23	22	29			
	E	0	0	2	3	14	18			
Blank	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			

Note.--



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13. ABSTRACT NROTC officers (N = 776) who had been asked in 1956, as NROTC applicants, to state their interest in a Navy career were followed up in 1964 to determine if the earlier statements were valid. Of those indicating positive career intent, 40 per cent were still on active duty six months after initial obligated service. Of those indicating negative motivation for a Naval career, only 37 per cent were still on active duty. Recommendations for using this information in future NROTC selection procedures are made.		

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